

Minutes of the General Assembly of EATA 2015

Held Saturday, September 12, 2015 at the Hotel Fischer in Dachau

1. Attendance and greeting participants

Present: VDA (4), egg (1), SDAT (2), ARCAT (1) AKVACZ (2), FFA (1) ICAIF (1). Excused: BBAT. Absent (no news): NBAT.

Werner Dossler is unfortunately ill and not allowed to travel. Our Vice President Anton Lamboj is also absent and announced his desire to withdraw from the committee. After consultation of the Assembly Werner Witopil and Thierry de Coulon took over the leadership of the General Assembly in 2015.

We need the EATA as the parent organization of all aquarists. When we think about the defense of our hobby, it is required that we not only talk about what we want to do, but really do it as well.

We must improve communication within the EATA (we communicate only once a year!). We should also improve our web page, which contains nothing useful at the moment.

2. Acceptance of the minutes of September 2014

Werner Witopil comments the minutes of the meeting of last year and highlights that several points mentioned in these minutes have not been followed in the past year. If the new statutes are approved, the new president will aim to ensure that these elements are realized.

3. Annual Report 2014/2015

Werner Witopil reads the annual report of the President Werner Dossler:

Working Report of the President 2014/2015

In 2014, on request of the FFA, the EATA sent a letter to the EU Commission for the Protection of Animals about the problem of coral cuttings protected by Cites. It remained unanswered despite a reminder, and the BBAT was asked to try to get an answer, without EU response so far. The question therefore remains open and the case is followed!

In preparation for the general meeting of Antwerp, a Roll Up presentation was made, a model will be prepared for each association and they will be able to print them themselves in their language.

I made contact with different companies to discuss the possibility of future sponsorship for the EATA, in order to position ourselves against organizations much stronger than us financially. This is still ongoing, I will arrange a meeting. Tetra and JBL are interested in a collaboration.

A work-group on the Statutes was organized in 2014 in Antwerp (Robi Guggenbühl SDAT, Erich SDAT Bühlmann, Werner Witopil VDA). They wrote new statutes and have meanwhile presented them to the EATA members. A vote on this subject will be held at the General Assembly in 2015.

EATA will ask the VDA to have the right to access their database (Nachzucht list) to replace the

Digital Julien's database. Stefan Hetz and Werner Witopil will take care.

The legal situation in the EU is still marked by national laws, it often varies by region in a country. European law (EU) has no force of law, but functions as a weighted recommendation.

In another change of vocabulary, there are no more negative and positive lists but black lists (prohibited) and white lists (allowed).

I had earlier this week a meeting with Gerald Bassleer, president of OFI (Ornamental Fish Industry) and a Belgian representative BVI about black and white lists (threats by invasive species etc.) as well as the question to participate in the rest of Europe to action launched in England by "Hands of My Hobby !! " (www.handsofmyhobby.org/). More information about this later.

In work currently:

New address lists

EATA Folders

Roll Ups presentation

EATA presentations (slide show) in several languages

Statutes of the EATA

Various actions as "Hobby of my hands," Resource Protection in Hawaii Invasive species, VDA database (Nachzucht list).

General Assembly at Dachau Germany on 09.12.2015: the preparations are done in cooperation with the VDA (Werner Witopil)!

For health reasons I can not participate, as stated in previous messages.

Accession of new umbrella associations

I contacted the **Scandinavian** organizations of which JJ Eckert provided the addresses. As a result, the **swedes** (SARF) said they were willing to become members, but still had to discuss it with their associations. **Finns** (EKSOOTTISET) are also interested but also must talk with their associations. Why that ? The Scandinavian are organized differently from us and this is the first time they plan an activity outside Scandinavia - but they realize that it is necessary.

Spain / Portugal: no reaction to my requests.

UK: I have good contacts with Chris Newman via Gerald Bassleer (OFI). He explores how collaboration would be possible, but there is no umbrella organisation in Britain, the British aquarist world is formed from small exploded groups. The problem is being followed.

Once we have accepted our statutes, I suggest that we put all our energy into the database with the VDA! This is very important for our future.

Mit Freundlichen Grüßen

Met vriendelijke groeten

Yours sincerely
Many greetings
Chairman EATA

Werner Dossler

The report is accepted, with thanks to Werner Dossler

4. Cashier report for 2014/2015

JJ Eckert reads the cashier report for the past year. Contributions must be paid on site. The question is asked of a fee increase. The general view is that the fee may be increased when we have actions that require such funds.

The discussion also includes rollups, planned last year, but not yet realized. Prices are quite low (in. € 65). Werner Witopil suggests that each association could take two roll ups, one of which would be paid by the EATA.

5. Discussion and approval of the new statutes

Robby Guggenbühl recalls the history of the development of the proposal of the statutes. The Belgian made a remark about the situation in countries that have multiple associations of different language, proposing that ALL can be members. Robby proposes to stick to a maximum of two, otherwise some countries would potentially be over represented. Another proposal was to indicate that the committee should be renewed by parts, not as a whole. Robby said that it is desirable, but you can not put it in the articles.

Replace Homepage by Internetseite. There are also some spelling or conjugation corrections.

VDA intends to have the German text (which will prevail) read by their lawyer. Should there be changes to be made, they will be voted next year.

The discussion also covers the rotating presidency. Akvacz thinks two years is too short. Moreover, participants are of the opinion that we should not fix the tournus to avoid an association to be forced to take a Presidency that it can assume. The articles are amended to replace "Landesverband" by "Verband" to allow two associations from the same country to take presidency in a row.

There is also the issue of the EATA address. Is "Brussel" enough? For now we leave it that way, we can change it later.

Robby draws attention to Article 2 defining the objectives of the EATA, which are quite ambitious. They also enable to accept umbrella organisations involved with other groups of animals.

P. Dvorak notes that what is expected of the president is a contact with politicians. He wonders whether a president from some countries may have no less "weight" than a president from another country. It is noted that the statutes have anticipated that the two vice presidents are those who have the main contacts. The problem is that the title of "President" opens more doors.

Vote: 7 associations present. To: 7, 0 against, 0 abstentions

The articles are accepted. We must now elect a committee.

6. Elections

We must elect a president, two vice presidents, a cashier, a secretary. It will also find two auditors.

The President takes the Chair for two years. The VDA agrees to take the presidency for the first two years and proposes Dr. Stefan Hetz, provided that he takes office in only in January 2016. Stefan Hetz is elected unanimously.

For the Vice-Presidents, Werner Werner Witopil proposes Werner Dossler as 1st Vice-President (External Relations). Dossler Werner is elected unanimously.

For the post of second vice president (internal affairs, project monitoring) Robby Guggenbühl proposes Werner Witopil, but he believes that it would be better that posts are distributed among the associations. Erich Bühlmann agreed to take this position and is elected unanimously.

JJ Eckert agreed to keep the cashier job as long as his health allows. He is elected unanimously.

Thierry Coulon agrees to keep the secretariat and is elected unanimously.

Auditors: it is established that the auditors must elected by name, but may submit their report in writing. Werner Witopil proposes that Prof. Dr. Petr Dvorak and Gerhard Gabler are the auditors for the next two years. Christian von Belle agrees to work as a substitute.

Werner Witopil thank all those who have accepted these charges and hopes the ease of these elections portends a bright future.

7. State of contacts with Sweden and Finland

The umbrella organisations of Sweden and Finland are interested in a collaborating. EATA members confirm the offer made to these associations to join the EATA and wish that the contacts are carried on.

No news of Portugal and Spain. There are contacts with England (Chris Newman). This year's meeting is in collision with the fair in Hamm, we should try to avoid this next time.

8. Information about the associations

The new **VDA** President Jens Crüger presents himself. He is active in politics and gives us a presentation to explain a little what happens in Brussels. This is important because we do not have the means to pay lobbyists as large organizations can afford. So we need to focus on the actions that we can carry out with our means.

Over 8,000 organizations send their representative in Brussels. Half are employees of enterprises, the other half is delegated to independent firms. Ecological subjects are those who are

subjected to the greatest influences. It is also the most regulated area and the one where there is less autonomy for the states (about 20%, other 80% are decided in Brussels: invasive species, for example)

The laws are often written very wide, because those who must apply them are not able to determine the species ..

Decisions are generally made mainly taking into account the economic implications, but rarely the ecological implications. The goal is that the EATA become the voice of the aquarists in Brussels. For example the German firefighters were able to use the Embassy of Hesse in Brussels to have an address in Brussels.

The VDA is also developing a new regulation for fish markets (Börsen), which is checked by veterinarians, and thus should be certified. With the hope that in the end the simple fact that a fish market follows this Regulation should be enough for it to be authorized.

The Austrian regulation is also recognized by their veterinarians.

The question remains open if it could be possible to create a recognized regulation at European level.

There have also been attempts in Germany to create regulations about dangerous animals (Gefahrtiergesetz), including for example toxic frogs, containing information devoid of any scientific foundation. The problems now also concern zoos. The German socialist party has a plan to require a certificate of competence to keep exotic animals.

Some want to ban the species that pose no problem, but put on a positive list species that end most often in shelters (which can, as a result, remain open). In Thuringia, there is a law on "dangerous" animals, the consequence being that the owners no more announce their animals.

In Colombia, a project was carried out to check fish mortality between capture and shipment (beyond that, one could prove a 3-15% mortality, sometimes below 1%).

There are too many middlemen, fish stay too long in transit and the Indians that capture the fish are too poorly paid. Work is under way with WWF Colombia to improve the situation.

After the lunch break, Petr Dvorak (**Akva CZ**) shows a documentary (Czech) showing the work of a professional breeder. This show was viewed by about a million viewers and aims to explain the value of such breeding.

Erich Bühlmann (**SDAT**) presents the training offered by SDAT to the FBA (Fachspezifische Berufsunabhängige Ausbildung). Necessary for those that host more than 1,000 fish.

The training consists of 40 hours minimum and practical training. There is one issue however: there is no professional breeder in Switzerland.

SDAT also offers a course for the breeding of marine fish. The course costs CHF 2200.-

Stefan Hetz raises the question of the examination certifying training - the socialist party requires a review to check that the objectives have been achieved. SDAT passed an entrance exam (minimum level) but no final exam.

SDAT has also created a label for "Kompetente Züchter" (competent breeder) that requires a training and a follow up after three years..

ÖVÖ: the problems are the same, contacts have been made with the authorities with good

results. The 2015 conference was well attended, participants are invited to the next congress in 2016.

ARCAT: not much to report right now, veterinarians are not too demanding and interest in training among aquarists is rather limited (3 participants at the last course).

FFA: all is quiet for now, let's hope that continues.

ICAIF: the French speaking association is working on a set of rules to hold fish. The members commit themselves to following these rules. They managed to be regarded as an external expert by the government council that develops rules concerning animals keeping in captivity by getting an article in a newspaper which immediately resulted in a call from the ministry.

Werner Witopil advises each association to create a structure that can get recognition as a Conservation Association. The VDA has successfully set up such a new "Referat" for two years. This structure is active in nature, animal and wildlife conservation. Through this work, the association gained more attention by authorities and in public. Werner Witopil is a member of this structure and will be happy to provide further information if interested.

The VDA group was able to realize together with the organization ZGAP (Zoological Society of species and Populations) a project on Madagascar to save nearly extinct cichlids. Such collaborations are possible with other aquarists organizations. Worldwide, there are possibilities for such projects and aquarium associations can play an important role in helping to initiate such projects. An EATA project together with ZGAP could be a target.

Werner Witopil also wished that all information of all associations appear in all newsletters: there are many events organized by associations which others know nothing about, or learn too late.

Aquarists in Europe must be more forced to work together under the roof of EATA for the preservation of our hobby. We all breed the same fish, that is why we must try to get the same rules in all countries in Europe. A big step and task will be manage to get a basic knowledge certification (Sachkundennachweis) to be acknowledged as a prerequisite for the holding of ornamental fish. Animal-friendly and expert animal husbandry is the premise of our organized aquaristic.

Next meeting of the EATA: 9-10 September 2016. Organising Association is the VDA. VDA is talking with Fa Sera in Heinsberg – near Köln -and Fa EFS in Sonnenfeld / Franken to find a meeting place.

Meeting ended at 15:30 clock

Following the meeting, a guide took place by the ichthyological department of the Zoological State Collection in Munich.